

The Comer's *Conflict* with *Satan*



CHARLES H. SPURGEON (1834-1892)

THE COMER'S CONFLICT WITH SATAN

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THE COMER'S CONFLICT WITH SATAN

*“And as he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.
And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and
delivered him again to his father.”*
—Luke 9:42.

Introduction

This child possessed with an evil spirit is a most fitting emblem of every ungodly and unconverted man. Though we be not possessed with devils, yet by nature we are possessed with devilish vices and lusts, which if they do not distress and vex our bodies, will most certainly destroy our souls. Never creature possessed with evil spirit was in a worse plight than the man who is without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world. The casting out of the unclean spirit was moreover a thing that was impossible to man and only possible to God; and so is the conversion of an ungodly sinner a thing beyond the reach of human ability, and only to be accomplished by the might of the Most High. The dreadful bellowings, foamings, and tearings caused in this unhappy child by the unclean spirit are a picture of the sins, iniquities, and vices into which ungodly men are continually and impetuously hurried; and a type of that sad and terrible suffering which remorse will by and by bring to their conscience, and which the vengeance of God will soon cause to occupy their hearts. The bringing of this child to the Savior by his parents teaches us a lesson, that those of us to whom the care of youth is entrusted, either as parents or teachers, should be anxious to bring our children to Jesus Christ, that He may graciously save them. The devout desire and compassion of the father for his child is but a pattern of what every parent ought to feel for his offspring. Like Abraham, he should pray, “O that Ishmael might live before thee!” (Gen 17:18), and not only put up the prayer, but also strive in the use of the means to bring his child to the Pool of Siloam that haply¹ the angel may stir the stream, and his son may step into the water and be made whole. The parent should place his offspring where the Savior walks, that He may look upon him and heal him. The coming of the child to Christ is a picture of saving faith; for faith is coming to Christ, simply believing in the power of His atonement. And lastly, the casting down and tearing which is mentioned in my text is a picture of the comer's conflict with the enemy of souls. “As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him.” Our subject this morning will be the well-known fact, that coming sinners, when they approach the Savior, are often thrown down by Satan and torn, so that they suffer exceedingly in their minds, and are well-nigh ready to give up in despair.

¹ haply – perhaps.

There are four points for our consideration this morning. That you may easily remember them, I have made them alliterative: the devil's doings, designs, discovery, and defeat.

1. The Devil's Doings

When this child came to Christ to be healed, the devil threw him down and tare him. Now this is an illustration of what Satan does with most, if not all sinners, when they come to Jesus to seek light and life through Him; he throws them down and tears them. Allow me to point out how it is that the devil causes those extraordinary pangs and agonies which attend conversion. He has a multitude of devices; for he is cunning and crafty, and he has divers² ways of accomplishing that end.

Perverting God's truth

First of all, he does this by perverting the truth of God for the destruction of the soul's hope and comfort. The devil is very sound in divinity. I never suspected him of heterodoxy yet. I believe him to be one of the most orthodox individuals in creation. Other people may disbelieve the doctrines of revelation, but the devil cannot, for he knows the truth, and though he will belie³ it often, he is so crafty that he understands that with the soul convinced of sin his best method is not to contradict the truth, but to pervert it. Now I will mention the five great doctrines which we hold to be most prominent in Scripture, by the perversion of each of which the devil tries to keep the soul in bondage, darkness, and despair.

First, there is the great doctrine of *election*: that God hath chosen to Himself a number that no man can number, who shall be holy, since they are ordained to be "a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit 2:14). Now the devil agitates the coming soul upon that doctrine. "Oh," saith he, "perhaps you are not elect. It is of no use your coming and struggling and striving. You may sit still and do nothing, and yet be saved, if you are to be saved; but if your name is written among the lost, all your praying, seeking, and believing cannot save you." Thus the devil begins preaching sovereignty in the sinner's ear, to make him believe that the Lord will assuredly cut him off. He asks, "How can you suppose that such a wretch as you can be elected? You deserve to be damned, and you know it. Your brother is a good moral man, but as for you, you are the chief of sinners. Do you think God would choose you?"

Then if the tempted one is instructed that election is not according to merit, but of God's free will, Satan opens another battery, and insinuates, "You would not feel like this if you were one of God's elect; you would not be allowed to come into all this suffering, and pray so long in vain." And again he whispers, "You are not one of His," and thus attempts to throw the soul down and tear it in pieces. I would just like to

² **divers** – several.

³ **belie** – contradict.

have a blow at his schemes this morning by reminding our friends that when they come to Christ they never need puzzle themselves about the doctrine of election. No one, in teaching a child the alphabet, makes him learn Z before he has learned A; so a sinner must not expect to learn election until he knows faith. The text with which he has to do is this: "He that believeth [on the Lord Jesus]...shall be saved" (Mar 16:16); and when the Lord has enabled him to learn and believe that, he may go on to this: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus" (1Pe 1:2).

But if he cannot shake off the subject from his mind, he needs not do it, for he may remember that every penitent is elect, every believer is elect. However great the sinner, if he does but repent, that is a proof that he is elect; if he does but believe on Christ, he is as certainly elected as his faith is genuine. I cannot tell that I am elected before I know whether I believe in God. I cannot tell a thing unless I see its effects. I cannot tell whether there is a seed in the ground unless you enable me to stir up the soil, or to wait till I see the blade shooting from under the earth; so I cannot tell whether your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life until I see God's love manifested in you in the stretching out of your hearts toward God. I cannot disembowel the deep rocks of obscurity to find out that hidden thing, unless evidences and effects furnish me with spade and mattock.

There is a newspaper in Glasgow called the Christian News, alias, the Un-Christian News, or Christian Wasp, and the editor says of me, that I am not fit to preach God's Word because I do not know (can you guess what it is?) who God's elect are. He writes words to this effect: "According to his own confession, the young man does not know who God's elect are until he has asked them questions, and knows their character." Well, if I did, I should be marvelously wise indeed. Who does know them apart from those signs, and marks, and evidences, in the heart and life which God always vouchsafes to his elect in due time? Shall I unlock the archives of heaven and read the rolls, or, with presumptuous hand unfold the Lamb's Book of Life, to know who are God's elect? No, I leave that for the editor of the Christian News to do; and when he publishes a full and correct list of the elect, no doubt it will be bought up tremendously, and the printer will speedily make a fortune by it. Let not the soul be distressed about election, for all who repent and believe do so as the effect of their election.

The next doctrine is that of *our depravity*: that all men are fallen in Adam, that they are all gone aside from the truth, and that moreover by their practice they have become full of sin; that in them "dwelleth no good thing" (Rom 7:18); and that if any good thing shall ever come there, it shall be put there by God; for there is not even the seed of goodness in the heart, much less the flower of it. The devil torments the soul with that doctrine, and he says, "See what a depraved creature you are; you know how dreadfully you have sinned against God; you have gone astray ten thousand times. See," he says, "there are your old sins still crying after you"; and he waves

his wand, and gives a resurrection to past iniquities, which rise up like ghosts and terrify the soul. “There, look at that midnight scene; remember the deed of ingratitude. Hark! Do you not hear that oath echoed back from the walls of the past? Look at your heart; can that ever be washed? Why, it is full of blackness! You know you tried to pray yesterday, and your mind roved to your business before you were half through your prayer; and since you have been seeking God, you have only been half in earnest, knocking at the door sometimes, and then afterwards giving it up. It is impossible you should ever be forgiven. You have gone too far astray for the shepherd to find you. You are altogether become filthy; your ‘heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked’ (Jer 17:9), and you cannot be saved.”

Many a poor soul has had a most terrible tearing with that doctrine. I have felt something of it myself, when I have verily thought that I must be rent in pieces by the dread remembrance of what I had been. The devil throws the sinner down and pulls him almost limb from limb, by persuading him that his guilt is heinous beyond parallel, and his iniquities are far beyond the reach of mercy, and his death warrant is signed.

Ah, poor soul, get up again; the devil has no right to throw you down. Your sin cannot be too great for God’s mercy. It is not the greatness of sin that can cause any man to be damned, if there be not a want⁴ of faith. If a man has faith, notwithstanding all the sins he ever may have committed, he shall be saved; but if he have but one sin without faith, that one sin shall utterly destroy him. Faith in the blood of Christ destroys the sting of sin. One drop of the Savior’s precious blood could extinguish a thousand flaming worlds if God should will it, much more put out the burning fears of your poor heart. If thou believest in Christ, thou shalt say to the mountain of thy guilt, “Be thou removed far hence, and cast into the depths of the sea.”

Then, there is the doctrine of *effectual calling*: that God calls His children effectually; that it is not the power of man which brings us to God, but that it is the work of God to bring man to grace; that He calls those whom He would save with an effectual and special call which He vouchsafes only to His children. “There now,” says the evil one, “the minister said there must be an effectual call; depend upon it—yours is not such a call. It never came from God. It is only a few heated feelings; you were excited a little under the sermon, and it will all be gone directly, like the morning cloud or the early dew. You have strong desires sometimes, but at other seasons they are not half so vehement. If the Lord drew you, you would be always drawn with the same power; it will be over soon, and you will be all the worse for having been inclined to go to God under these legal convictions, and then, afterwards, running away from Him.”

Well, beloved, tell Satan that you don’t know whether it is an effectual call, but you know this, that if you perish you will go to Christ and perish only there. Tell him

⁴ **want** – lack.

you know it is so effectual that you cannot help going to Christ; that whether it is to last or not you cannot say, that you will let him know by and by; but that you are resolved (for this is your last defense), if you perish, to perish at the cross of Christ; and so by the help of God you may by such means overcome him when he throws you down on that doctrine.

The devil will also pervert the doctrine of *final perseverance*. “Look,” says Satan, “the children of God always hold on their way. They never leave off being holy; they persevere; their faith is like the path of the just, shining ‘more and more unto the perfect day’ (Pro 4:18); and so would yours be if you were one of the Lord’s. But you will never be able to persevere. Don’t you remember six months ago, when you were lying on a sick bed you resolved to serve God, and it all broke down? You have vowed many times that you would be a Christian, and it has not lasted a fortnight.⁵ It will never do; you are too fickle. You will never keep fast hold on Christ. You will go with Him a little while, but you will be sure to turn back; therefore, you cannot be one of the Lord’s, for they never do turn back.” So he tries to pull and tear the poor soul on that great and comforting doctrine. The same nail on which a sinner must hang his hope the devil tries to drive into the very temples of his faith that he may die like Sisera in the tent of Jael. Oh, poor soul, tell Satan that thy perseverance is not thine, but that God is the author of it; that however weak thou art thou knowest thy weakness, but that if God begins a good work he will never leave it unfinished (Phi 1:6). And repelling him thus, thou mayest rise up from that throwing down and tearing which he has given to thee.

Then there is the doctrine of *redemption* with which the unclean spirit will assault the soul. “Oh,” says Satan, “it is true Christ died, but not for you; you are a peculiar character.” I remember the devil once made me believe that I was one alone, without a companion. I thought there was no one like myself. I saw that others had sinned as I had done, and had gone as far as I had, but I fancied that there was something peculiar about my sin. Thus the devil tried to set me apart as if I did not belong to the rest of mankind. I thought that if I had been anybody else I might have been saved. How often I wished I had been a poor swearing drunken man in the streets, and then I thought I might have a better chance; but as it was, I thought I was to die alone, like the deer in the shade of the forest. But well do I remember my friends singing that sweet hymn:

*His grace is sov’reign, rich and free,
And why, my soul, why not for thee?*

One of the hymns in *Denham’s Selection*,⁶ and it ought to have been in Rippon’s,⁷ as well as I can remember, ends thus:

⁵ **fortnight** – two weeks.

⁶ David Denham, *Denham’s Selection or the Saint’s Melody; containing Eleven Hundred and Forty Hymns* (1837).

*He shed his blood so rich and free,
And why, my soul, why not for thee?*

That is just the question we never put to ourselves. We say, "Sure, my soul, why not for anybody else but thee." Up, poor soul! If Satan is trying to tear thee, tell him it is written, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Heb 7:25); that whosoever cometh He will in no wise cast out (Joh 6:37); and it may be that thus God will deliver thee from that desperate conflict into which, as a coming sinner, thou hast been cast.

Telling falsehoods

But Satan is not very scrupulous, and he sometimes throws the coming sinner down and tears him by telling horrible falsehoods. Some of you may not have known this, and I thank God if you do not understand some of the things of which I am about to speak. Many a time when the soul is coming to Christ, Satan violently injects infidel thoughts. I have never been thoroughly an unbeliever but once, and that was not before I knew the need of a Savior, but after it. It was just when I wanted Christ and panted after Him, that on a sudden the thought crossed my mind, which I abhorred but could not conquer, that there was no God, no Christ, no heaven, no hell; that all my prayers were but a farce,⁸ and that I might as well have whistled to the winds or spoken to the howling waves. Ah! I remember how my ship drifted along through that sea of fire, loosened from the anchor of my faith which I had received from my fathers. I doubted everything, until at last the devil defeated himself by making me doubt my own existence, and I thought I was an idea floating in the nothingness of acuity.⁹ Then startled with that thought, and feeling that I was substantial flesh and blood after all, I saw that God was, and Christ was, and heaven was, and hell was, and that all these things were very truths. I should not be astonished if many here have been upon the very verge of infidelity, and have doubted almost everything. It is when Satan finds the heart tender that he tries to stamp his own impress of infidelity upon the soul; but, blessed be God, he never accomplishes it in the truly coming sinner.

He labors also to inject blasphemous thoughts, and then tells us they are ours. Has he not sometimes poured in most vehement torrents of blasphemy and evil imaginations into our hearts, which we ignorantly thought must be our own? Yet not one of them perhaps belonged to us. I remember I had once been alone musing on God, when on a sudden it seemed as if the floodgates of hell had been loosened. My head became a very pandemonium. Ten thousand evil spirits seemed to be holding

⁷ John Rippon, *A Selection of Hymns from the Best Authors, Intended to Be an Appendix to Dr. Watts' Psalms and Hymns*, commonly known as *Rippon's Selection* (1787). Rippon was one of Spurgeon's predecessors as pastor of the New Park Street Chapel.

⁸ **farce** – ridiculous comedy; sham; pretense.

⁹ **acuity** – sharpness or keenness of thought.

carnival within my brain; and I held my mouth lest I should give utterance to the words of blasphemy that were poured into my ears. Things I had never heard or thought of before came rushing impetuously into my mind, and I could scarce withstand their influence. It was the devil throwing me down and tearing me. Ah, poor soul, thou wilt have that perhaps; but remember it is only one of the tricks of the archenemy. He drives his unclean beasts into your field and then calls them yours. Now, in old time, when tramps and vagrants troubled a parish, they whipped them and then sent them on to the next parish. So when you get these evil thoughts, give them a sound whipping and send them away; they do not belong to you if you do not indulge them. But if you fear that these thoughts are your own, you may say, "I will go to Christ, and even if these blasphemies are mine, I will confess them to the great High Priest, for I know that 'all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men'" (Mat 12:31).

Applying threatening passages

Then if the devil cannot overcome you there, he tries another method; he takes all the threatening passages out of God's Word, and says they all apply to you. He reads you this passage, "There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it" (1Jo 5:16). "There," says the devil, "the apostle did not say he could even pray for the man who had committed certain sins." Then he reads that the sin against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven (Mat 12:31). "There," he says, "is your character: you have committed sin against the Holy Ghost, and you will never be pardoned." Then he brings another passage: "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone" (Hos 4:17). "There," says Satan, "you have had no liberty in prayer lately; God has let you alone. You are given unto idols; you are entirely destroyed"; and the cruel fiend howls his song of joy, and makes a merry dance over the thought that the poor soul is to be lost. But do not believe him, my dear friends. No man has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost as long as he has grace to repent; it is certain that no man can have committed that sin if he flies to Christ and believes on Him. No believing soul can commit it; no penitent sinner ever has committed it. If a man be careless and thoughtless; if he can hear a terrible sermon and laugh it off, and put away his convictions; if he never feels any strivings of conscience, there is a fear that he may have committed that sin. But as long as you have any desires for Christ, you have no more committed that sin than you have flown up to the stars and swept cobwebs from the skies. As long as you have any sense of your guilt, any desire to be redeemed, you cannot have fallen into that sin. As a penitent you may still be saved; but if you had committed it, you could not be penitent.

2. The Devil's Design

Let me dwell for a moment or two upon the second point: the *devil's design*. Why does he throw the coming soul down and tear it?

First, because he does not like to lose it. “No king will willingly lose his subjects,” said Apollyon to Christian when he stretched himself across the road, “and I swear thou shalt go no farther; here will I spill thy soul.”¹⁰ There he stood, vowing vengeance at him because he had escaped from his dominion. Do you suppose that Satan would lose his subjects one by one, and not be wroth? Assuredly not. As soon as he sees a soul hurrying off to the wicket gate, with his eyes fixed on the light, away go all hell’s dogs after him. “There is another of my subjects going; my empire is being thinned; my family is being diminished”: and he tries with his might and main to bring the poor soul back again. Ah, soul, don’t be deceived by him; his design is to throw you down. He does not tell thee these things to do thee good, or to humble thee, but in order to keep thee from coming to Christ, and decoy¹¹ thee into his net, where he may utterly destroy thee.

Sometimes, I believe, he has the vile design of inducing poor souls to make away with themselves before they have faith in Christ. This is an extreme case, but I have met with not a few who have been thus tempted to take away their lives, and rush before their Maker with their hands red with their own blood; for Satan knows full well “that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1Jo 3:15). But he never accomplished his design in the soul of one elect sinner yet.

Then Satan has another motive. When the soul is coming to Christ he tries, out of spite, to worry that soul. Satan’s heart is made up of that which is just the opposite of benevolence—malevolence. He hates everything, and loves nothing. He hates to see any creature happy, any soul glad; and when he sees a soul coming to Christ, he says, “Ah! I have nearly lost him; I shall never have an opportunity of bringing thundering condemnation into his ears, and dragging him about in the flames of hell as I thought; and now before he is gone I will do something. The last grip shall be a hard one; the last blow shall be dealt with all my power.” And down he comes upon the poor soul, who falls wallowing upon the earth in despair and doubt. Then he tears him, and will not leave him until he has worked as much of his way with him as the Lord will let him. Don’t be afraid, child of God. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam 4:17); and even though he may cast you to the ground, remember that the righteous falleth many times, but he riseth up again (Pro 24:16); and so shalt thou, and the designs of the enemy shall be frustrated, as it is written, “Thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee” (Deu 33:29).

¹⁰ The story of Christian’s battle with Apollyon (Satan) is related in *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan, available from CHAPEL LIBRARY.

¹¹ **decoy** – lure for capture.

3. The Devil's Discovery¹²

In the third place, there is the *devil's discovery*. I do not think the devil would be able to throw one poor sinner to the ground if he came as the devil; but it is seldom he does that. He presents himself as an angel of light, or even as the Holy Spirit. He knows that the Holy Spirit does all the work of salvation, and therefore he tries to counterfeit the operations of the Holy Ghost. He knows it is the Holy Spirit's work to take away pride from man, and to humble the soul. Well, Satan counterfeits that blessed work, and takes away hope from man as well as pride. Under the pretense of humbling the poor sinner, and telling him that he ought to lie lower in the dust, he not only humbles the poor soul, but puts it down so low that he dishonors God too in the sinner's estimation, by telling him that God Himself cannot save him. Satan will try, if he can, to mar God's work, while it is yet upon the potter's wheel, by putting on his own instrument while the clay is whirling round upon the wheel, that it may not assume the Holy Ghost's shape, but that there may be some marks of the devil's workmanship in the article. Sometimes you ask God that you may be able to agonize in prayer. "That is right," says Satan, "agonize in prayer; but remember you must now receive the mercy, or you are lost." So he glides in and adds a little piece to the truth, making you believe it is an impulse of the Holy Spirit, while it is, after all, a deception of the father of lies. The Holy Ghost tells you that you are a lost sinner, and undone. "Ah!" says the devil, "you are, and you cannot be saved"; and thus again, under the very garb of the Spirit's operations, he deceives the soul. It is my firm belief that very much of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience. Many Christians experience things that have nothing to do with Christianity, but more to do with demonology. When you read the convictions of John Bunyan,¹³ you may think that all that terror was the fruit of the Holy Spirit; but be assured it was the fruit of Satanic influence. You may think it is God's Holy Spirit that drives sinners to despair and keeps them shut up in the iron cage so long. Not at all! There was God's Holy Spirit, and then Satan came in to mar the work if he could.

Now I will give the poor sinner a means of detecting Satan, so that he may know whether his convictions are from the Holy Spirit, or merely the bellowing of hell in his ears. In the first place, you may be always sure that that which comes from the devil will make you look at yourselves and not at Christ. The Holy Spirit's work is to turn our eyes from ourselves to Jesus Christ, but the enemy's work is the very opposite. Nine out of ten of the insinuations of the devil have to do with ourselves. "You are guilty," says the devil—that is self. "You have not faith"—that is self. "You do not repent enough"—that is self. "You have got such a wavering hold of Christ"—that is self. "You have none of the joy of the Spirit, and therefore cannot be one of his"—

¹² **discovery** – disclosure; bringing to light; making known.

¹³ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, available as a PDF download at www.chapellibrary.org

that is self. Thus the devil begins picking holes in us; whereas the Holy Spirit takes self entirely away, and tells us that we are “nothing at all,” but that

Jesus Christ is all in all.

Satan brings the carcass of self and pulls it about, and because that is corrupt, tells us that most assuredly we cannot be saved. But remember, sinner, it is not thy hold of Christ that saves thee—it is Christ; it is not thy joy in Christ that saves thee—it is Christ; it is not even faith in Christ, though that is the instrument—it is Christ’s blood and merits. Therefore, look not so much to thy hand with which thou art grasping Christ, as to Christ; look not to thy hope, but to Christ, the source of thy hope; look not to thy faith, but to Christ, the author and finisher of thy faith; and if thou dost that, ten thousand devils cannot throw thee down, but as long as thou lookest at thyself, the meanest of those evil spirits may tread thee beneath his feet.

You may discern the devil’s insinuations in another way: they generally reflect upon some attribute of God. Sometimes they reflect upon His love, and tell you that God will not save you; sometimes upon His longsuffering, and they tell you you are too old, and that God won’t save you. Sometimes [they reflect] upon His sovereignty, and they tell you that God does not choose as He wills, but that He has respect to characters, and takes men according to their merits. Sometimes they reflect upon God’s truth, and they tell you that He will not keep His promise. Ay, and sometimes they reflect upon the very being of God, and tell you that there is not such a one. But O poor trembling soul, Satan shall not get an advantage over thee; but take care—detect him; and when thou hast found out the devil, thou hast frustrated his aims as far as thou art thyself concerned.

4. The Devil’s Defeat

Now, in the last place, we have to consider the *devil’s defeat*. How was he defeated? Jesus rebuked him. Beloved, there is no other way for us to be saved from the castings down of Satan but the rebuke of Jesus. “Oh,” says one poor soul, “many months and years have I been distressed for fear I should not be saved. I have gone from place to place in hopes that some minister might say something which should rebuke the evil spirit.” Sister, or beloved brother, have you not been doing wrong? Is it not Jesus who rebukes the evil spirit? Or perhaps you have been trying to rebuke the evil spirit yourself. You have tried to argue and dispute with him; you have said that you are not so vile as he described you to be. Beloved, have you not been doing wrong? It is not your business to rebuke Satan. “The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 1:9); that is what thou shouldst say. Oh, if you had looked to Jesus and said, “Lord, rebuke him,” he had only need say, “Hush!” and the demon would have been still in a moment, for he knows how omnipotent Jesus is, since he feels His power. But you get striving to pacify your own heart when you are under these temptations, instead of remembering that it is Jesus only Who can remove the affliction. If I had one here

who suffered the most from this ailment—the possession of Satan—I would say to him, Beloved, sit down; remember Jesus; go to Gethsemane, and, depend upon it, the devil will never stay there with you; think on the agonies of your Savior covered with His blood; the devil cannot bear Christ’s blood—he goes howling away at the very thought of it. Go to the pavement where Christ endured the accursed flagellation; the devil will not stay long there with you; and if you sit at the foot of His cross and say,

*Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His ever precious blood,*

you will not long find the devil vexing you. It is no use to get praying simply. Prayer is good in itself, but that is not the way to get rid of Satan—it is thinking of Christ. We get saying, “Oh, that I had stronger faith! Oh, that I had love to Jesus!” It is good for a Christian to say that, but it is not enough. The way to overcome Satan and to have peace with God is through Christ. “I am the way” (Joh 14:6); if thou wouldst know the way, come to Christ. “I am the truth”; if thou wouldst refute the devil’s lies, come to the Truth. “I am the life”; if thou wouldst be spared from Satan’s killing, come to Jesus. There is one thing which we all of us too much becloud in our preaching, though I believe we do it very unintentionally—namely, the great truth that it is not prayer, it is not faith, it is not our doings, it is not our feelings upon which we must rest, but upon Christ, and on Christ alone. We are apt to think that we are not in a right state, that we do not feel enough, instead of remembering that our business is not with self, but Christ. Our business is only with Christ. O soul, if thou couldst fix thy soul on Jesus, and neglect everything else; if thou couldst but despise good works, and aught else, so far as they relate to thy salvation, and look wholly, simply on Christ, I tell thee Satan would soon give up throwing thee down. He would find it would not answer his purpose; for thou wouldst fall on Christ, and like the giant who fell upon his mother, the earth, thou wouldst rise up each time stronger than before. Have I then within hearing one poor tried, tempted, devil-dragged soul? Has Satan been pulling you through the thorns and briers and thickets until you are scarred and bruised? Come now, I have tried to preach a rough sermon to you because I knew I had rough work to do with roughly used souls. Is there nothing here, poor sinner, that thou canst lay hold upon? Art thou so locked up that not one ray of light comes through the iron bars? What! Art thou so chained that thou canst not move hand or foot? Why, man, I have brought thee a pitcher and a piece of bread today even in thy dungeon. Though thou art cast down, there is a little here to comfort thee in what I have said. But oh, if my Master would come, He would bring more than that; for He would rebuke the unclean spirit, and it would immediately depart from thee. Let me beseech thee, look only to Christ; never expect deliverance from self, from Satan, from ministers, or from means of any kind apart from Christ. Keep thine eye simply on Him; let His death, His agonies, His groans, His sufferings, His merits, His glories, [and] His intercession be fresh upon thy mind. When thou wakest in the morning look for Him; when thou liest down at night look for Him. Oh,

let not thy hopes or fears come between thee and Christ! Seek only Christ. Let the hymn we sang be thy hymn and thy prayer—

*Lord, deny me what Thou wilt,
Only ease me of my guilt.
Prostrate at Thy feet I lie;
Give me Christ, or else I die.*

And then, even though the devil throw thee down and tear thee, it were better he should do so now than that he should tear thee forever.

I have some here, however, who will laugh at what I have been preaching this morning. Ah, sirs, you may do so; but bitter though my text may be, I wish you had it in your mouths. Though sad be the experience of being torn when coming to Christ, I had rather see you so than see you whole, away from Christ. It is better to be rent in pieces coming to the Savior than to have a sound, whole heart away from Him. Tremble, sinner, tremble; for if thou comest not to Christ, He shall rend thee at last. His eye shall not pity, neither shall His hand spare thee. He hath said, “Consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver” (Psa 50:22). Sirs, within another hour, and some of you may know this; certainly, before long there are some who will be torn in pieces by the wrath of God. “Why will ye die?” (Eze 33:11). Why will ye die? You cannot answer the question, I think; but let it rest upon your hearts. What profit will you have in your own blood? What will you profit if you gain the whole world and lose your own soul? (Mat 16:26). Remember, Jesus Christ can save even you. Believe on His name, ye convinced sinners, believe on Christ. The Lord bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

